

The death of Henri d'Esch

Outline:

According to legend, the mysterious appearance of the ghost of Henri of Esch, the historical count of Esch-sur-Sûre occurs every July 14. Henri of Esch left on a crusade in 1096 never to return alive to Luxembourg, but every year he reappears in ghostly form in the small chapel of Esch-sur-Sûre, located northwest of Luxembourg.

Text:

Esch-sur-Sûre is a charming village of some 2600 inhabitants. Nestled in a meander of the Sûre river, it is known for its medieval old town, its castle and the proximity of a lake created in the 1950s. This dam lake is a drinking water reservoir, but also a leisure base - a very pleasant stopover when hiking in the region. In Esch-sur-Sûre, located in the heart of the Upper Sûre Nature Park, you will find the Park House. Located in a former drapery that was renovated in the mid-1990s, it is possible to visit the drapery museum and attend textile workshops.

The remains of the castle overlooking the city date from the 10th century. It was the meeting place for the departure of the first crusaders in 1096, under the command of the famous Godefroy de Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lotharingia. It is said that Count Henri of Esch arrived in the Holy Land in December 1096 with the other lords, including his brother Geoffroy d'Esch. Henri of Esch was particularly appreciated by Godfrey for his battle skills, which he notoriously demonstrated during the siege of Nicaea in 1097. He is said to have died of the plague in 1098 and was buried in the fortress of Tilbeşar.

However, legend has it that the remains of Henry of Esch appear on 14 July every year in the chapel of Esch, as he appeared on the night of 14 July 1097 to his wife, Countess Jeanne of Wiltz. That night, around midnight, a maid called the countess. Half asleep, they went to the chapel, lit by many candles and filled with armed knights. They gathered around a platform on which Henri of Esch lay in a white sheet. While they sang a dirge, a knight poured hot oil on the gaping wound in Henri's chest which had been caused by an arrow. As his wife threw herself on the lifeless body of her husband, everything disappeared: the knights, the lights, the deceased... Alone in front of the immaculate white sheet, Jeanne saw a glint and discovered the ring she had given to her husband as a token of love before he left for the crusade. A week later, Raimond de Toul reported the death of the Count of Esch. However, Jeanne of Wiltz had already known the sad news since that night of July 14.